

Maniac Mansion

*Trespassers will be horribly mutilated
from the deranged minds of
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Introduction (read this first)

If you were to follow Cemetery Lane all the way to where it dead ends on the outskirts of town, you would find the old Schwartz mansion. You can't miss it. It sits on top of a small hill, a rambling Victorian structure silhouetted by a full moon. Its shutters bang in the wind -- even when there is none to be felt. Dead trees surround the yard, their branches reaching out like clawed fingers, poised to grab anyone foolish enough to pass the rusted and broken wrought iron gate. Yet, despite its appearance, the house is far from abandoned. The Schwartz family still lives there, although nobody has seen them since Doctor Fred Schwartz was fired from the hospital years ago after a bizarre series of events, surrounded in mystery and rumored cover-up. Following his dismissal, the Doctor and his wife (who worked as a nurse at the hospital) pulled their son Ed out of school and went into seclusion....here. In the years that followed they haven't been seen by a living soul. However, on a night when the moon is full -- a night like tonight -- flickering lights can be seen from the windows, and strange noises are heard....

The Story

Some twenty years ago, in the dead of night, during a seemingly ordinary meteor shower, something strange happened -- something that would change Dr. Fred and his family for a long time to come. The inhabitants of the Schwartz Mansion were awakened by a loud crash. An investigation of the noise by Dr. Fred uncovered a meteorite that had struck the ground. Dr. Fred, being the scientific type, returned to his lab with the alien rock. Months passed as he tried to break the meteor open. Strange readings were coming from within and Dr. Fred knew if he could only get it open, he would make the scientific discovery of the decade. The alien rock became an obsession for the Doctor. He spent more and more of his time down in the lab. Finally what the Doctor had been working so hard for came true -- he cracked open the meteor. The meteor was filled with an oozing purple slime. The slime seemed to come alive once exposed to the air. It started pulsing, bubbling and emanating weird noises. As Dr. Fred moved in to take a closer look, a purple ray showered the room, engulfing him and one of his pet Tentacles. From that day on, Dr. Fred began to behave strangely, and he had a crazed purple look in his eyes.

It was after the meteor experience that Dr. Fred's career took a turn for the worse. He began spending all of his time constructing a mysterious machine, under direct orders from the space visitor. The machine would be used to suck psychic energy from its human victims to rejuvenate the strange meteor life-form in Dr. Fred's lab. Over the years to come, many people in the nearby town disappeared ... most of them due to Dr. Fred.

Lucasfilm's Computer Cinema

"Maniac Mansion" is designed as the first game in Lucasfilm's Computer Cinema series. Computer Cinema products are story-based graphic adventure games. The game's story has a beginning, and takes place in a specific environment. However, the game can have several different endings, depending on what the player does during the game. The player participates in the creation of the story by directing the behavior and actions of the characters under his/her control. This form of player interaction is different from the standard adventure game, in that the player is directing the actions of more than one character, rather than "role-playing" with control over only one character.

While the player is creating parts of the story by directing his/her characters' actions, other compatible story lines and plot elements are being selected, developed and displayed by the program. The game has a wide array of possible directions, and several unique storylines, depending on the actions of the player. The player has the power to change the flow of the story. The more the player dabbles in the story telling process, the better (or worse) the ending may be. For a given story, there will be many different endings and many different ways to get there.

Throughout the game, the story will be told to the player through selected "cut-scenes", which are non-interactive animated scenes. Cut-scenes, like scene cuts in movies, cut to somewhere else to show action relevant to the story. As the player's actions change the story line he will see different "cut-scenes" to reflect these changes, and to give him information about important events and actions relevant to the story he is creating.

The Goal of the Game

The player's goal in "Maniac Mansion" is to direct his/her characters to find their friend Sandy, who has been kidnapped by Dr. Fred and is held hostage in the Mansion. While uncovering the mysteries of the Mansion however, the player will discover Dr. Fred's bizarre plan to build the strange machine, and must stop him.

The Screen

The player will see a 2 1/2-D screen. Looking at the room, the point of view will be as if a camera were mounted on one of the walls. The room will be in perspective to some degree. Since the rooms are not very deep, no vanishing point is visible. There will be objects in the rooms that characters can walk in front of, as well as behind - with full clipping. Rooms are generally larger than the visible screen. When a character controlled by the player tries to walk off the edge of the screen, the "camera" will follow the action. Whenever a character walks from one room to another, the "camera" will cut to the new room. The

imaginary camera will follow the character as much as possible without cutting. This will give the player the illusion that he is looking in on the game.

Multiple Characters

NOT IN ALPHA RELEASE VERSION: At the beginning of the game, the player will get to choose three characters from a group of 7 to go into the house and rescue Sandy. Each of the 7 characters has individual talents and characteristics which will be important for solving some of the mysteries of the mansion. For example, only two of the characters can fix the broken phone. And Michael, being on the college newspaper, is able to develop a roll of film that might be found. Any combination of three characters will be able to finish the game, however they will just do it in very different ways and come up with different endings. Some groups of characters will have a much more difficult time solving the puzzles in the house.

From among the three characters he takes into the mansion, the player can select which character he wants to control by choosing that character's name from the list of characters at the bottom of the screen (see "User Interface" and screen diagram.) He will have to use all three characters in a co-operative way to get a satisfying ending to the story. The player directs his characters to perform certain actions by using the joystick to direct a cursor on the screen. He can point to where the character is to move, or point to objects that the character is supposed to pick up, touch, or use.

INCLUDED IN THE ALPHA RELEASE ARE SYD, RAZOR, AND BERNARD.

Dave - Dave is going into the house to rescue his girlfriend Sandy.

Michael - He is a good friend of Dave's and is the photographer for the college newspaper.

Syd - Syd is an aspiring musician as well as a really nice guy.

Wendy - She is a literature major at the university. She is also very handy at fixing things.

Razor - Razor currently belongs to a punk band called "Razor and the Scumettes", but due to creative differences she is looking for another band.

Bernard - Bernard is a member of the society for young physicists as well as an active participant in the local computer club. Way to go Bernard!

Sandy - Sandy is Dave's girl friend. She was kidnapped by Dr. Fred.

User Interface

The user interface is how the player communicates to the Characters, how he gives them orders. For Alpha version use function keys.

The top line of the screen is the message line. The message line is used to communicate any spoken words. When a character speaks, what he/she says is displayed here. This line is also used to communicate game related messages to the player, i.e. "TURN DISK OVER". The next 17 lines are the Main Screen, displaying what the camera sees in the game. Most of the time this will be the room that the currently active character is in. Below the Main Screen is the Sentence Line. The Sentence Line is used to construct sentences from the groups of words in the columns below. All sentences are made up of a verb and one or two nouns. An example might be "lock door with key". "Lock" is the verb and "door" and "key" are nouns. Prepositions like "with" are put in automatically by the user interface.

A list of verbs appears below the Sentence Line. The player will always be able to see all the verbs ever used in the game. No verbs will appear or disappear as the game progresses. This will allow the player to know all the choices he has from the beginning.

Below the verbs are the nouns (objects a character has taken). This list is empty when a character enters the house; objects are added during the game. In addition, nouns can be added to the Sentence Line by pointing to an object in the room.

For example, if you wanted Wendy to open a door with a key, you would do the following: First, select "unlock" from the verb group--the word "unlock" will appear on the Sentence Line. Next, move the cursor up to the door in the room and double click. Now the Sentence Line will read, "unlock door with". Move the cursor to the noun group, and double click on "brass key" from the Inventory of the active character (Wendy). "Brass key" is now placed at the end of the sentence. The sentence now reads: "unlock door with brass key". At any time during the sentence building process you can change the verb or nouns and the sentence line will be updated automatically.

As another example, to flush the toilet first select use (or pull) from the verb list. Then move the cursor up onto the main screen and touch the toilet pull chain. Now the sentence line reads, "use pull chain". Next, click one more time on the pull chain to execute the sentence. The toilet will flush.

The player can also click on the sentence line to execute the current sentence.

The player can also switch control from one character to another by pressing one of the function keys (ALPHA ONLY): F1 selects Syd, F3 selects Razor, and F5 selects Bernard.

List of Verbs

Pick up: objects you find & put them in your pocket (inventory).

Open: doors, cabinets, windows, boxes, jars, etc.

Close

Turn on: lights, stereo, microwave, t.v., circuit breakers, nuclear reactor, etc.

Turn off

Fix: phone, video game machine, wires, etc.

Lock: door, cabinet, etc.

Unlock

Push: button, grating, etc.

Pull: switch, grating, etc.

Use: sponge in swimming pool, glass jar in faucet, phone, etc.

Read: sign, nuclear reactor, poster.

Give: NOT IN ALPHA RELEASE

Walk to: wherever you point to & press button. Note that using "Walk To" on open doors causes you to leave the room.

Endings

There are four main endings to Maniac Mansion, not including the various ways of dying. In the following four sections I will describe the stories and characters involved. For each story, one main character is needed to perform a primary task (Bernard fixing the broken radio, for example), but the other characters can also take part in the scenarios.

ONLY THE METEOR POLICE SCENARIO IS INCLUDED IN THE ALPHA RELEASE. MOST OF THE GAME ACTIVITIES ARE ILLUSTRATED IN IT.

Puzzle Solving

Playing Maniac Mansion involves solving a large complex puzzle made up of hundreds of smaller puzzles. Since it's a graphic adventure game, the player will get all clues visually. Most of the puzzles will have to be solved in a certain order. There are always several ways to get something done (of course, there is always a best way).

Maniac Mansion Release Notes
Alpha Submission
Version 1.0
12/17/86

Contents:

Included in this release:

- Complete game play with the Meteor Police scenario.
- All rooms.
- 3 of the 7 characters.
- Partial music & sound effects.
- Temporary disk loading procedure.

Known bugs/work arounds/areas to avoid:

- Player enters room & the screen is filled w/garbage even though character is still visible. To work around this select a different character w/the Function key, then go back to the original character. Keep track of the number of times this occurs and if the work around does or doesn't work.
- After entering a new room the screen blacks out. Note the number of times this occurs.
- When the border flashes quickly with multi-colors this is an unrecoverable error. Notes the numbers of times this happens and how to recreate it.
- The characters walk through solid object; (no need to report).
- The characters take the long way around to walk to a point; (no need to report)
- The characters jump or jerk when they first enter a room; (no need to report)
- Bernard has vertical transparent stripes on him while he is walking to the left.
- The speaker sound pops when the character enters a room; (no need to report)
- Background noise priorities (i.e. nuclear reactor siren vs. shower).
- The frame rate of the characters will be slowed down for smoother walking.
- All graphic interrupts & screen glitches will be cleaned up.

Not yet implemented:

- The characters do not always look in the correct direction when they use things.
- Light and darkness does not work (like turn on light, flashlight).
- Death scenes, though message says you died.
- Winning/losing.
- Sounds, like doors opening/closing.
- 'Give' verb. You have to use an object rather than give it to another character.

- Quips indicating who's talking.
- The animation for mouths moving and facial expressions.
- 'Use' piano.
- Open/close shower curtain.

Feedback requested:

- Overall ease of user interface.
- Appropriate choice of verbs (use, in particular).
- Any need to change object name based on its state (like sponge vs. sponge w/water).
- The ease of controlling the cursor/feel of the joystick.
- The appropriate level of difficulty to solve puzzles (like, getting key from chandelier or getting past Nurse Edna).
- Reaction to humor.
- Failed attempts to use object w/something and what it was expected to do.

Upcoming revisions:

- Polish game play.
- Add additional 3 scenarios (Meteor Memoirs, Syd & the Suction Cups, & Weird Ed Commando Raid).
- Complete the sound effects.
- Opening and closing animation.
- Full animation of cut scenes.
- Save & load game.